

# **Drawing Aside the Purple Curtain**

*The Papal System Today: an Analysis of the News*

## **The Horrific Abuse of Nuns by a Jesuit Priest-Artist**

**Shaun Willcock**

### **Nothing Has Changed**

Over the years there have been ignorant Protestants who have indignantly said, “Oh, all those tall tales about priests abusing and raping nuns – they’re just sensationalist anti-Catholic horror stories! They’re not true.” Others, only slightly less ignorant, have said, “Yes, that sort of thing went on in the past, in the Dark Ages or perhaps even into the nineteenth century, but it doesn’t happen today.” Such statements are usually made by ecumenical “love gospel Evangelicals” who believe that Roman Catholics are their brothers and sisters in Christ, that we should all just “preach Jesus and His love”. As far as they are concerned, anyone who exposes such things is an unloving scaremonger, a dinosaur out of touch with the great “revival” we’re all supposed to be experiencing.

The Vatican’s ecumenical machine has really done a number on them.

For the plain truth of the matter is that priests of Rome are not only sexually abusing boys and girls by the tens of thousands throughout the world, but are still doing what priests have done for centuries: they are using convents as their own private brothels, sexually abusing nuns and then threatening to harm them – and actually doing so – if they dare to speak up. It goes on all the time, all over the world, just as it always has. What ex-priest Charles Chiniquy wrote about in his great book, *The Priest, the Woman, and the Confessional*<sup>1</sup> is happening just as much today as it did in his day.

### **Famous Jesuit in Horrific Abuse Scandal**

The Jesuit Order is presently being shaken by a huge sexual abuse scandal involving Marko Ivan Rupnik, a celebrity Jesuit priest-artist and personal friend of Francis the Jesuit pope, whose mosaics decorate Romish edifices in the Vatican and various other countries. He is accused of sexually and physically abusing nuns while officiating as the priest-confessor to their convent in Slovenia. The scandal is so huge that the ex-provincial of the Euro-Mediterranean Jesuit province, priest Gianfranco Matarazzo, described it as “a tsunami of injustice, lack of transparency, questionable management, dysfunctional activity, personalized work, apostolic community sacrificed to the leader and unequal treatment.” He said the case would do “deadly damage to the Jesuit Order, but even more so to Holy Mother Church.”<sup>2</sup>

### **Absolving His Lover - and Receiving Papal Protection!**

The first sexual scandal concerning Rupnik revealed how the Jesuits protect their own. In 2019 Rupnik had a sexual relationship with a woman, and then he *absolved* her in the confessional, when she confessed her sin to him! As a result of this, a Roman Catholic ecclesiastical tribunal excommunicated Rupnik. He had violated canons 977 and 1378 of Rome’s Code of Canon Law: he had absolved a woman of her sins with whom he had entertained “*de sexto*” relations. Canon 977

states, “The absolution of a partner in a sin against the sixth commandment of the Decalogue is invalid, except in danger of death”; and Canon 1378 states, “A priest who acts against the prescription of can. 977 incurs a *latae-sententiae* excommunication reserved to the Apostolic See.”<sup>3</sup> The commandment against adultery is the sixth in the Roman Catholic Bible, whereas the truth is that it is the seventh of the ten commandments of the law.

So Rupnik was excommunicated. *But just hours later*, it was reported, Francis *lifted* the sentence of excommunication against his buddy!<sup>4</sup>

## **Nuns Appeal to Francis – But Nothing Is Done**

This was shocking enough – the Roman pope overriding the official excommunication of this Jesuit. But the second sexual scandal concerning Rupnik is even worse. In 2021 the nuns of the Loyola community in Ljubljana, Slovenia, wrote three letters to Francis to inform him of Rupnik’s abuse of *at least* nine nuns since the 1990s. Earlier, a Vatican investigation headed by an auxiliary bishop who interviewed witnesses to ascertain if the allegations were true found that: “The victims heard are credible, and their story is solid.” These poor women were at Rupnik’s mercy, for as he was a priest they believed him to be “another Christ”, with authority to hear their confessions and absolve them of their sins. They *had to* go to confess their sins to him, alone with him in private. This is Roman Catholic teaching. Without him, as they falsely believed, their sins could not be forgiven. But he made the most of the opportunity by sexually abusing them.

One of the nuns who wrote to Francis stated that the superior general of their nunnery (the “mother superior”), Ivanka Hosta, was a friend of Rupnik’s, who was aware of the abuses but did nothing to protect the nuns. “Rupnik forced me to do things that I, in reality, did not want to do,” the nun said. “He used violence on me; he hit me. In his eyes, in his voice, there was the conviction that he was untouchable. He abused me, my trust. I was submissive. His power, the esteem he enjoys – he is convinced that no one would question his good faith.”<sup>5</sup>

The nuns doubtless believed that Francis would understand and act. He was their pope! He would not tolerate this kind of behaviour from one of his priests – surely not! Ah, they did not know the kind of man they had pinned their hopes on. He had no intention whatsoever of disciplining his predatory priest. Francis is a Jesuit, Rupnik is a Jesuit, and they were friends. Not only did he lift Rupnik’s excommunication, not only did he also then ignore the nuns’ 2021 appeals to him, but in January 2022 – *months after* the nuns had written to him – Francis welcomed Rupnik to a private papal audience! Furthermore, Rupnik was scheduled to conduct a day of Jesuit “spiritual exercises” at the Papist Shrine of the Holy House of Loreto in Italy from 13-17 February 2023.<sup>6</sup>

## **A Nun’s Shocking Testimony – But Nothing is Done**

One of the nuns who said that she was abused by Rupnik revealed that he abused more than nine – he actually abused over 20 nuns. In one of his filthy acts with two nuns at the same time, he claimed the three of them were thereby imitating the Trinity! Under the pseudonym of “Anna”, this nun detailed how Rupnik engaged in “extreme erotic games” with her. She stated that he frequently attended porn cinemas, and took her twice to see porn films. “The first time he kissed me on the mouth,” she said, “he told me that he kissed the altar in this manner when he celebrated the Eucharist, [and he kissed me in this way] because with me he could experience sex as an expression of God’s love.”<sup>7</sup>

After nine years of abuse, Anna attempted suicide. Although she reported Rupnik to a Jesuit cardinal named Tomáš Špidlik and to other authorities on several occasions, her complaints were simply ignored. Špidlik had ties to Rupnik, and refused to hear her confession when she began revealing the abuse. Rupnik’s Jesuit superiors did nothing to help her. “Father Marko was protected by everyone, and I was nothing more than the scapegoat for an embarrassing situation, the weak link in the chain that could be sacrificed for the greater good,” Anna declared.

When one realises just how many Jesuits were and still are hovering around and overseeing this whole sordid process, it is not at all surprising that the decision to close the case was taken: as an ex-

nun, Doris Reisinger, who was herself raped by a priest, remarked, “The accused Rupnik is a Jesuit. The head of the agency [the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith]... is a Jesuit. A senior official of this agency lives in the same house as Rupnik. The pope is a Jesuit. Who seriously believes that there are no biases here?”<sup>8</sup> The Jesuits know how to look after their own.

Anna pointed out that “Ignatian [i.e. Jesuit] discernment”, which calls one to “total availability and openness” to a “spiritual father”, made her obey Rupnik unconditionally. This is indeed true Jesuitism, for absolute blind obedience to the superior is inculcated in all Jesuits, and by them into others. “If your guide says that God wants it and you don’t obey, you put yourself against God,” she said. “That’s where manipulation can creep in, as happened with Father Rupnik.” She said he would publicly shame her to other group members if she resisted his advances. “Only Father Marko decided who was good and worth supporting; whoever was in error was humiliated and set aside,” she said.

In 1993, after a meeting between the superior of the convent, the nun Ivanka Hosta, an archbishop, and Rupnik, he was expelled from the community and moved to Rome with some nuns to work there. Anna was not permitted to testify at this meeting, and Hosta ordered her to work in the convent kitchen “for the rest of my life, with no prospect of change. I obeyed, even though in my heart I thought I was going to die.” Shortly afterwards, Hosta said Anna was under the devil’s influence. She left the community the following day. Years later she received an apology from Hosta.

In June 2022 Anna wrote an open email to the Jesuit general, and copied it to cardinals, bishops, and ordinary Roman Catholics. “I write this open letter to try to break – once again – the circle of silence and exclusion within which I found myself for many – too many years: twenty-eight,” she wrote. However, none of the 18 priests (mostly Jesuits) or others responded to her email.<sup>9</sup>

## **The Jesuit General Finally Reacts – But Does Nothing**

Months went by and nothing was done. Finally, in December 2022 the Jesuit Order issued a statement acknowledging that Rome’s Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (the old Inquisition) had indeed received a complaint in 2021 against Rupnik, and that the Jesuits then conducted an internal investigation and submitted their report – but the Inquisition then *closed the case* in October 2022 as the 30-year statute of limitations had expired!

It got worse. The provincial of the Jesuits in Slovenia, Miran Zvanut, dismissed news reports against Rupnik as “quite inflated and with a lot of untruths.”<sup>10</sup> He even denied that the complaints against Rupnik had come from the nuns of the convent.

And how did the “Black Pope” himself, the most powerful man on the planet, the Jesuit general Arturo Sosa, react? By the usual Jesuit tactic of defending the Order and the Jesuit involved, providing lame excuses over and over. In a December 2022 radio interview, Sosa said, “Any case like this is very painful, [but]... we have not hidden anything.”<sup>11</sup> Really? This was a blatant lie.

Note his Jesuitical subtlety: “In this case, it seems to me important to stress a few things. One, there are no minors involved. In other words, this concerns matters between adults.” A very peculiar statement indeed! The accusations were not merely about consensual sexual acts between adults. They were about rape and sexual abuse!

When he was asked why the victims were not mentioned in the statement, he replied: “because there is no process that says that here there is a victim and there a victimizer. It was beyond the statute of limitations. There is no classification of victims, there is a suspicion of facts that went beyond the normal limits between adult people.” Oh, he is all heart.

Sosa said that when the Jesuits received the request from the Inquisition to carry out the investigation, Rupnik was forbidden from hearing confessions, leading the Jesuits’ Spiritual Exercises, making any public statement, etc. However, when the interviewer said, “[Rupnik] continues to travel and do various things. For example, in February [2023] a retreat is planned at the Loreto shrine. Does that not enter into the planned measures?” Sosa did the kind of nifty sidestepping the Jesuits are infamous for: “I don’t think a retreat is planned, but he should not [do it]. He is not under arrest, and no measure impinges upon his artistic work. He has very important artistic commitments. He can celebrate the

Eucharist, what he is forbidden from is directing spiritual exercises or hearing confessions. Those are the measures, because it has to be proportional to the facts. He still has the same mobility as any of us, for work reasons.” Note his words; “*no measure impinges on his artistic work.*” His artistic work, then, evidently trumps the violent and sexual abuse of nuns faithfully serving the Roman Catholic institution! After all, “He has very important artistic commitments”! Never mind the fact that those poor nuns allegedly suffered abuse at the hands of a trusted priest!

He added, “in the end, what we want with people – the victims and the perpetrators – is that they forgive one another.” Take note of this, dear reader? “Forgive *one another*”? What must the perpetrator forgive with regards to the victim? What was the Black Pope saying – that priest Rupnik should go to the nuns he raped and say, “*I forgive you*”? Forgive them for what? What sin did they commit against *him*? What kind of perverted teaching is this, that the one who commits the terrible crime must forgive the victims of his crime? This statement must surely rank as one of the most hideous statements we have ever read.

How true the comment on this by Dr Doris Reisinger, the former nun quoted above: “The Rupnik case shows: Francis does not take sexual abuse of nuns seriously. He personally lifted the excommunication of his friend and brother Rupnik, who abused several nuns.”<sup>12</sup> She added: “There is no transparency and no sympathy with Rupnik’s victims, and above all, the most outrageous thing, really, there seems to be a deliberate silence on the most recent case and the excommunication. Personally, it makes me feel sick.”<sup>13</sup>

After all the prevaricating, and insisting that the Jesuit Order was not concealing anything, the Jesuit general then admitted that Rupnik had incurred an automatic excommunication when he absolved the woman with whom he had sexual relations. The Jesuit Order was aware of this fact, but did not disclose it until well into December 2022, when Sosa revealed it in his briefing to journalists in Rome!<sup>14</sup> When asked why the Jesuits had not revealed the confession-related excommunication, Sosa said “they were two different moments, with two different cases.”<sup>15</sup>

Sosa also contradicted the Jesuits’ earlier statement and now said that the restrictions on Rupnik’s priestly work, which remain in effect, dated from this earlier conviction, not from the 2021 allegations which the Vatican’s Inquisition decided were considered to be too old to prosecute as the 30-year statute of limitations on allegations of abuse had run out. It closed the case in October 2022.

As reported in an article for the Jesuit magazine, *America*: “The Jesuit order...was forced to admit Wednesday that its initial statements about the Rev. Marko Ivan Rupnik... were less than complete. The order had said Rupnik was accused in 2021 of unspecified problems ‘in the way he exercised his ministry’ but that the Vatican’s Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith determined the allegations were too old to prosecute. But under questioning by journalists, the Jesuit superior general, the Rev. Arturo Sosa, acknowledged the Congregation had prosecuted Rupnik for a separate, prior case from 2019 that ended with his conviction and temporary excommunication for one of the gravest crimes in the church’s in-house canon law: that he used the confessional to absolve a woman with whom he previously had sexual relations.... Rupnik quickly admitted to the confession-related crime and formally repented, and the Congregation immediately lifted his excommunication from the church, Sosa said in response to a question from The Associated Press.”<sup>16</sup>

As explained by Doris Reisinger, the ex-nun quoted above: Rupnik received the – theoretically – severest punishment known in canon law: excommunication. What many people do not realize is that it is also a very cheap penalty that can be easily reversed.” All that the person has to do is recognise it and “repent”, which Rupnik did. She added, “This is also the case when priests force their pregnant victims to have an abortion: They are excommunicated, repented and immediately rehabilitated. The victim does not have to play a role in this process. The general public usually doesn’t find out anything about it.”<sup>17</sup>

As to who had revoked Rupnik’s excommunication, Sosa did not say. But as stated above, the Jesuit pope himself did so, mere hours after the ecclesiastical tribunal unanimously imposed the sentence! However, when asked if indeed Francis had intervened, the Jesuit general – *who is in fact Francis*’

*superior*, and therefore *would* know – replied, “Generally, the heads of the dicastery report the cases to the pope. I can imagine that the prefect spoke to the Holy Father, but I cannot say yes or no.”<sup>18</sup> Sosa was a liar, plain and simple. Francis is a faithful Jesuit, under orders to his supreme commander, the Jesuit general Sosa. Sosa definitely knew that Francis had intervened – and Francis would never have intervened without Sosa’s permission!

## **Finally, Some Jesuit Action – But Not Much**

As intense media pressure mounted on the Jesuit Order in the wake of the massive scandal swirling around Rupnik, and in the light of Anna’s revelations in December 2022, the Jesuits finally changed course and invited victims to contact them. “My main concern concerning all of this is for those who have suffered,” said senior Jesuit priest Johan Verschueren. “I assure you that you will be listened to with understanding and with empathy.”<sup>19</sup> A case of far too little, far too late. All could see it was only a belated and reluctant response when sustained pressure forced the Jesuits to finally act. What’s more, it turns out that this very priest Verschueren was one of those who received Anna’s email back in June but did nothing about it.

In addition, after weeks of silence, the Slovenian bishops expressed regret for concealing Rupnik’s abuse of some 20 nuns. They issued a press release condemning his “acts of emotional, sexual, and spiritual violence and gross abuse of the sacrament of reconciliation” as being “unacceptable” and “despicable.”<sup>20</sup> They said they also summoned an extraordinary session of their bishops’ conference after they learned of “the discovery of the abuses” and “after the Jesuit superiors confirmed the veracity of the facts.” But the website of the bishops also posted a *denial* of the abuses! Clearly, they were only reacting reluctantly and because they were forced to do so. They still stood solidly behind their brother-Jesuit!

## **And Still Nothing from Francis**

Even after the bishops’ statement, in late December after remaining silent for weeks, Francis’ cardinal vicar, Angelo De Donatis, the man who governs the diocese of Rome on behalf of the pope, was still refusing to denounce Rupnik (who now lives in Rome), claiming he was “not aware” of Rupnik’s abuse of nuns “until recently”, and saying that the diocese of Rome was “comforted by the discernment of its Supreme Pastor [Francis]” and could not transform “*de plano* a denunciation into a crime” (*de plano* is a term in Roman law, an attempt to come to an informal resolution to a dispute instead of the formal method of a tribunal).<sup>21</sup>

De Donatis blamed the media especially, saying, “The judgments that we see spread by many with particular vehemence do not seem to manifest either an evangelical criterion for the search for truth or a basic criterion on which every state of law is founded.” In reply to this, the Italian media outlet which first broke the Rupnik story strongly condemned De Donatis’ statement, saying “the pope’s vicar has forgotten that we are not talking here of accusations but of sentencing.” “We are not in an investigative phase; we are looking at the decided facts.”

Vaticanist Christopher Altieri was certainly correct when he wrote, “Basically, Cardinal De Donatis is telling everyone who reads and understands curialesque [the bureaucratic-speak of the Roman curia] that Pope Francis is calling the shots on this one, and that Pope Francis has Father Rupnik’s back.” “By invoking ‘the discernment of the Supreme Pastor,’ De Donatis is letting his professional ecclesiastical readership know that Rupnik is under the pope’s protection.”<sup>22</sup>

## **A Second Nun’s Testimony – Again, Nothing is Done**

Then a second nun, who worked for Vatican Radio, came forward and testified that her superior, Ivanka Hosta, colluded with Rupnik to cover up his sexual abuse of nuns. She was Hosta’s former secretary. “Esther” (her pseudonym) stated, “Ivanka [Hosta] – I believe out of fear that the news of

Rupnik's abuses would somehow get out and jeopardize the future of the community – kept silent and assumed a totally repressive and controlling attitude towards us.” When Esther left the community, Hosta tried to get her fired from her position at a Roman Catholic university in Rome.<sup>23</sup>

Esther said that many other nuns had come to her and told her about Rupnik's abuse of them. “I had seen them cry for years, since 1985,” she said. She too told a bishop and a priest (who was the Slovenian Jesuit provincial at the time) about the abuse. The priest said he did not believe it. In fact, Esther said, not one Jesuit or any other priest had ever shown interest in helping. “In 1998, I went to the Jesuit curia [in Rome] and told them everything again... but once again nothing happened,” she said.

She said that because of the abuse suffered by nuns at the hands of Rupnik and Hosta, some of them took drugs, and eventually almost half of the nuns left the community. “Nineteen of us left; one even escaped through the window. Personal freedom was almost completely wiped out.”

## Conclusion

A woman writing for the Jesuit publication, *America*, stated: “Revelations that the Vatican let a famous priest off the hook twice for abusing his authority over adult women has exposed two main weaknesses in the Holy See's abuse policies: sexual and spiritual misconduct against adult women is rarely if ever punished, and secrecy still reigns supreme, especially when powerful priests are involved.”<sup>24</sup>

And through all these weeks, Francis I, pope of Rome and a Jesuit himself, has remained absolutely silent.

No doubt the death of Benedict XVI in December came at a most opportune and “convenient” time for Francis and his Jesuit buddies, providing them with a most welcome respite from the intense media pressure they were enduring over the Rupnik horrors.

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## ENDNOTES:

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